United Nations A/64/911–S/2010/463

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
14 September 2010
Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-fourth session
Agenda item 17
The situation in Afghanistan

Security Council
Sixty-fifth year

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/11 and Security Council resolution 1917 (2010), in which the Council requested me to report on developments in Afghanistan every three months.

2. This report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including those of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and reviews the situation in the country since my previous report, of 16 June 2010 (A/64/872-S/2010/318). This report provides a summary of key political and security developments, including the Kabul Conference and preparations for national legislative elections, as well as regional and international events related to Afghanistan. In addition, I briefed the Security Council on developments in Afghanistan on 23 July 2010, following my participation in the Kabul Conference.

3. The Security Council visited Afghanistan from 21 to 25 June. The Council, during the visit, reaffirmed its continued support for the Government and people of Afghanistan, reviewed progress made by the Government of Afghanistan, and assessed the status of implementation of relevant Council resolutions.

II. Political and security developments

Political developments

4. The main political development during the reporting period was the holding of the Kabul Conference on 20 July 2010. The Conference, co-chaired by the Government and the United Nations, represented a milestone in Afghanistan's

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transition towards the full exercise of its sovereign authority. It was the largest international high-level event held in Kabul since the beginning of the Bonn process, with the participation of 76 international delegations.

5. The Conference marked a decisive first step within the Kabul process, which began with the inaugural speech of President Hamid Karzai in 2009, and through which Afghans will gradually assume full responsibility for their own security, governance, and economic and social development. The Government of Afghanistan, in preparation for the Conference, drafted 23 national priority strategies and programmes, including the national security policy and the Afghan peace and reintegration programme. It also designed a strategy for the transfer of lead responsibility for security on a province-by-province basis, according to clearly defined conditions.

6. Preparations for the parliamentary elections scheduled for 18 September 2010 were also a major political focus during this period. The publication of the final list of polling centre locations four weeks in advance was an important development that will increase the transparency of the elections. All other technical elements of the electoral preparations have also proceeded on schedule, including the finalization of the list of candidates and the beginning of the official campaign period.

7. Parliamentary elections have taken on increased significance because of the political impasse between the executive and legislative branches over nominations to the Cabinet. The impasse, which has existed since January, has left several cabinet seats unfilled. The Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the National Assembly) approved five of seven new Cabinet nominees on 28 June prior to the parliamentary recess, including for the Ministries of Public Works, Refugees and Repatriation, Borders and Tribal Affairs, Commerce, and the Interior. Nominees for Higher Education and Transport were rejected, while five other ministerial posts remain vacant. The two rejected nominees were Hazara, sparking protests on the part of the Hazara community.

Electoral activities

8. The Independent Electoral Commission on 12 July announced the final list of candidates for the national assembly elections. The final list reflected the exclusion of 36 candidates by the Commission on the ground of links to illegal armed groups. The Electoral Complaints Commission, thereafter, excluded additional candidates for technical irregularities, bringing the total number of excluded candidates to 76 as at 5 September. Twelve of the excluded candidates are women. As at 5 September, the number of candidates eligible to contest is 2,513, including 397 (or 15 per cent) women and 52 Kuchis (42 men and 10 women), who will stand for the 249 parliamentary seats. Two hundred and twenty-nine of the sitting 249 members of Parliament are seeking re-election.

9. The election campaign began on 23 June, on schedule, following the finalization of the list of candidates. Lively campaigns have been observed in the more secure areas of the country, including through television and billboards both in the capital and in the provinces. I am particularly encouraged by the vigorous campaigning of female candidates in these areas. Campaigning is less dynamic in less secure areas, and is conducted out of the public eye, especially in some districts in the south.

10. The Independent Electoral Commission, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has met all of its logistical deadlines and has kept the electoral timetable on track. Electoral preparations are proceeding smoothly from a technical and operational standpoint. Major procurement has been finalized and all sensitive materials, including ballot papers, are in the country. The packing of polling centre and polling station kits was successfully completed and the distribution of materials was initiated on time. Public information campaigns and outreach activities administered by the Independent Electoral Commission are also on schedule. The Commission has been able to recruit the staff it needs and training of the staff has been conducted as planned. A Commission-administered voter registration update concluded on 12 August, and 376,081 additional voter registration cards were issued, of which 40 per cent were issued to women.

11. The Independent Electoral Commission, with United Nations support, has established a wide-ranging set of fraud-mitigation measures to address potential irregularities, such as the removal of more than 6,000 former polling staff and increased fraud mitigation measures in the polling centres that witnessed the greatest number of irregularities over the past three elections. My Special Representative, on 23 June, commented on the vetting of candidates, stressing the need for a thorough and constructive approach to the process. He further issued a press release on 12 August highlighting several key steps to be taken for the upcoming elections. He called in particular for the Independent Electoral Commission to make the polling centre list public; encouraged observers (international and national) and candidate and party agents to register to observe the elections; condemned violence against candidates; and urged voters to follow the electoral campaigns and vote for their preferred candidates on 18 September. The Commission, by 4 September, accredited 13 domestic observation institutions, 17 international observation institutions, 17 international media, 24 domestic media, and agents representing 10 political parties and 1,229 candidates. As at 4 September, the Commission has accredited a total of 223,727 observers. Technical support to the elections provided by the United Nations has included daily collaboration with the Electoral Commission's Field Operations Unit, responsible for identifying polling centres, recruiting polling centre staff, and packing and distributing polling centre materials. The United Nations chief technical adviser on elections provides senior-level guidance to both the Chair and the secretariat of the Independent Electoral Commission on critical decisions. Technical advisers assist the operational capacity of the Electoral Complaints Commission, both in logistical and substantive matters. This support has so far been effective, even with a reduced presence compared to the 2009 elections, because of the growing capacity of the Afghan electoral authorities.

12. The Electoral Complaints Commission, with support from UNDP and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, has been addressing the need to establish provincial Electoral Complaints Commission offices. Unlike past elections, in 2010 most of the complaints will be adjudicated at the provincial level while the central Electoral Complaints Commission will only hear appeals. The Electoral Complaints Commission, pursuant to the electoral law, serves as the final arbiter in the candidate vetting process. The Commission had received, by 6 September, 1,502 complaints throughout the country regarding campaign irregularities and reports of intimidation and bias of provincial staff of the Independent Electoral Commission towards candidates, of which 350 have so far

been adjudicated. It has undertaken training programmes for its provincial commissioners and staff to ensure that it has the substantive capacity to fulfil its mandate. It conducted a second round of training for the 104 provincial commissioners and more than 200 of their support staff during the last week of August; the training was focused on the organizational rules of procedure for the polling day and complaints arising during the polling day. The establishment, in the short time available, of Electoral Complaints Commission offices across the country with sufficient capacity to adjudicate the complaints has proved challenging, however.

13. The security situation remains a cause for concern and creates enormous challenges in the electoral process. Widespread intimidation of candidates, particularly women, has been reported. As at 30 August, four candidates have been killed, while five agents campaigning for a female candidate were found dead in Herat on 29 August. Fragile security could lead to the occurrence of systematic fraud and irregularities. Measures that have been taken to mitigate such risks in the forthcoming parliamentary elections include coordinated work between the Independent Electoral Commission and the security institutions to assess the situation and to determine the final list of polling centres and the timing of its distribution. The delay in the finalization and public announcement of polling centres during the presidential elections in 2009 had led to confusion among the electorate, the inability of party and candidate agents to reach certain polling areas in time, and, in some instances, to fraud. In 2010, the Independent Electoral Commission has taken a proactive approach to finalizing the polling centre list well in advance of the polling day, and has retained the final authority to decide which polling centres may or may not open. The Commission supplied a list of polling centre locations to the Afghan National Security Forces in May. The Security Forces, on 8 August, provided the Commission with a detailed security assessment of each polling centre. The assessment concluded that 5,897 of the proposed 6,835 polling centres could be opened (88 per cent), similar to the 2009 polling centre figures. The Commission then undertook its own security assessment based on the data received by the Security Forces, and made the final list public on 18 August, stating that a total of 938 polling centres would not open (up from 797 in the list presented by the Commission in May). The Commission emphasized that this number may still decrease, depending on the security situation, but will not increase, a decision that my Special Representative had particularly emphasized as necessary. The Commission, in this manner, enhanced the transparency of the process, allowing voters to know well in advance where to cast their ballot.

14. The disenfranchisement of voters that may occur as a result of the geographical distribution of polling centres in certain areas is, however, a serious concern. The Independent Electoral Commission has taken measures to ensure that the nearest polling centres to those that it has decided not to open are adequately prepared, and have more polling stations for voters who may travel there.

Security situation

15. The security situation has continued to deteriorate in many parts of the country, the overall number of security incidents having increased by 69 per cent compared to the same months in 2009. This can be attributed to a combination of factors, including increased international troop levels and a corresponding increase in security operations by the Afghan National Security Forces, and increased

activities of anti-government elements. The reporting period recorded a rise in the number of incidents using improvised explosive devices, by 82 per cent compared to the same period in 2009. One device targeted a UNAMA convoy in Parwan Province, killing three police escorts and a driver. Complex suicide attacks involving multiple bombers doubled from the previous period to a rate of four per month and continued to target the guesthouses and offices of international civilian development agencies. Such attacks negatively affect the population's confidence in the ability of the Afghan and international security forces to uphold the rule of law and deliver essential social services.

16. Anti-government elements significantly increased their assassination campaign. During the reporting period, 21 people were reported to be assassinated each week, compared to seven per week in the previous period. The majority of assassinations continue to occur in the south and south-east, primarily targeting Government officials, civilians and members of the Afghan National Security Forces. Ten members of a humanitarian non-governmental organization were killed in southern Badakhshan Province when returning from a medical mission early in August. Both the Taliban and Hezb-e Islami of Gulbuddin Hikmatyar claimed responsibility for the attack, but the actual perpetrators remain unknown.

17. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in January 2010 initiated the deployment of 34,000 additional troops to Afghanistan to support national security forces in their stabilization efforts. Large military operations by Government and international forces are focusing on Helmand and Kandahar to restore stability and enable Government institutions to provide services.

Security sector reform

18. Community-based defence initiatives across Afghanistan are intended to stem the spread of insurgency and mitigate the challenges associated with the recruitment and retention of the Afghan National Security Forces. UNAMA has provided advice to the Government and ISAF in the development of an overarching framework, within which all community-based defence initiatives will be subsumed and linked to reintegration efforts. My Special Representative has received assurances from both the Government and ISAF that the recruitment of *Police-e-Mahali* (Afghan Local Police) units across Afghanistan will reflect the country's ethnic and tribal composition. Ongoing training of recruits, which includes a human rights component, aims at ensuring that they are suitably prepared for possible inclusion in the National Security Forces. The Afghan Local Police will also be strictly defensive in nature and, finally, those units will be subordinate to the command and control of the Afghan National Security Forces.

19. UNAMA continues to monitor the evolution of the joint Government-ISAF transition plan, which aims to enable the Government of Afghanistan to strengthen further its ownership and leadership across all government functions and includes a joint Afghan-NATO *Inteqal* Board, co-chaired by the Afghan National Security Adviser, the NATO senior civilian representative and the ISAF Commander, and comprising the key Afghan and NATO/ISAF stakeholders, with my Special Representative as an observer. UNAMA played an advisory role in the drafting of the plan, encouraging in particular the alignment of its governance and development milestones with Afghan national priorities. This has been incorporated into the plan.

Peace and reintegration

20. President Karzai, on 29 June 2010, issued a presidential decree formally launching the peace, reconciliation and reintegration programme. This decree, which was in-line with the communiqué of the London Conference and followed the endorsement by the Consultative Peace Jirga of the Afghan peace and reintegration programme, designated the presidential adviser, Massoom Stanekzai, to lead the joint secretariat of the programme. The decree also required the creation of a financial oversight committee to support the establishment of a peace and reintegration trust fund. The Committee held its inaugural meeting on 27 July, chaired by the Minister of Finance, Omar Zakhilwal, during which the Government and donors formalized an agreement on the financial mechanisms that will be used to create a peace and reintegration trust fund. A presidential decree of 5 June further established a Detention Release Committee to review cases of suspected insurgents detained without evidence or charge. The Committee is part of the Government's efforts to foster goodwill and trust as it seeks to engage the armed opposition in a political process.

21. The High Peace Council, which will guide and support the Government's efforts to build on the outcomes of the Consultative Peace Jirga, was established on 4 September. My Special Representative has advocated broad representation of religious, ethnic and civil society groups, including women. He is expected to co-chair the Special Peace and Reintegration Sub-Committee, the major donor coordination mechanism that will make strategic recommendations to the programme.

22. The Monitoring Team operating under the direction of the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) visited Afghanistan in June. The Committee concluded, on 30 July 2010, the review of its Consolidated List of individuals and entities subject to sanctions measures, undertaken pursuant to Security Council resolution 1822 (2008). The Committee determined that of the 488 entries on its Consolidated List, 443 (132 associated with the Taliban) remained appropriate, while 45 entries, 10 of which were formerly associated with the Taliban, were removed as a result of the review. Also, on 19 July, the Committee had approved the addition to the Consolidated List of three Afghan individuals involved in raising funds for the Taliban. The de-listing was generally welcomed and commended in Afghanistan as a practical step to facilitate the realization of the peace and reconciliation programme. A representative of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, however, described the announcement, in a television interview, as worrying, arguing that the de-listing process might lead to impunity for alleged perpetrators of war crimes.

Regional cooperation

23. The Government of Afghanistan continued its dialogue and cooperation with neighbouring countries. Bilateral talks in Islamabad between the Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs, Zalmai Rassoul, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, on 24 and 25 June confirmed a mutual desire to increase joint efforts to respond to security concerns and bolster economic cooperation. On 18 July the two Governments finalized their extensive negotiations on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement. The Agreement, which is essential to realizing the full economic potential of the two countries, will

now be reviewed by the competent legal authorities in Afghanistan and Pakistan prior to its presentation to both Parliaments for ratification.

24. My Special Representative continued to support regional initiatives and cooperation programmes through his good offices, in particular through the Kabul Silk Road initiative, which he co-chairs with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and which is attended by representatives of countries in the broader region. The initiative is helping to generate substantive interest and cooperation on key areas where concrete steps can be taken to address regional issues. The third meeting of the Kabul Silk Route initiative was held on 11 July, and focused on regional cooperation on counter-narcotics. The participants reviewed existing initiatives and started identifying gaps. They also agreed on the principle of shared responsibility and expressed their support for the national drug control strategy of the Government of Afghanistan.

25. The Afghan Foreign Ministry hosted a regional conference of representatives from regional bodies on the eve of the Kabul Conference. Those bodies included the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Islamic Development Bank, and the object of the conference was to discuss a coordination mechanism to improve regional cooperation. Participants agreed to establish a high-level Core Group of key regional bodies, which will (a) ensure high-level coordination of the Afghan component of regional cooperation frameworks among member States; (b) provide the political support of member countries to ensure that technical hurdles are promptly resolved; and (c) mobilize sufficient resources to meet programme commitments and recommendations. UNAMA participated in the meeting and will support the high-level Core Group.

26. President Karzai took part in the fourth trilateral summit meeting of the Presidents of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Tajikistan, in Tehran on 5 August. The leaders agreed to advance joint strategic projects to build railways and roads, and power stations and transmission lines between Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran via Afghanistan, and announced the establishment of joint committees to draw up short-, medium- and long-term strategies for trilateral cooperation. A quadrilateral summit was held on 18 August in Sochi, Russian Federation, at the invitation of President Dmitry A. Medvedev. President Karzai, President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan, and President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan met with President Medvedev to discuss areas of priority focus and cooperation to advance economic development and stability in the region.

27. Other relevant regional cooperation meetings have been held during the reporting period, including on criminal, counter-narcotic and border management-related matters, with the presence of high-ranking officials from Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries. They included the workshop organized jointly by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on international cooperation on criminal matters (Astana, 20-22 July), the first meeting of the Chiefs of counter-narcotic police of the Economic Cooperation Organization member States (Tehran, 2 and 3 August), and the fourth senior officials meeting of the Triangular Initiative, held on 3 August within the framework of the Rainbow Strategy of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Moreover, a new round of joint operations was conducted on

2 August by the Afghan and Iranian forces and by Afghan and Pakistan forces, resulting in significant seizures of illicit drugs, including over 80 kg of heroin, 130 kg of opium and 55 kg of hashish, and in the arrest of more than 15 smugglers.

III. Transition to greater Afghan leadership

28. The major event during this reporting period was the Kabul Conference of 20 July, which the United Nations co-chaired with the Government. Attended by representatives of 16 countries and 14 international organizations, the Conference demonstrated the will and increasing capacity of Afghans to assume full leadership and ownership of their future. The Kabul process contains at its heart a dual commitment: a renewed commitment by the Government to the Afghan people to improve security, governance and economic opportunities, and a corresponding pledge by the international community to Afghanistan to align its resources and activities in support of the transition to effective and accountable Afghan leadership. The communiqué of the Conference reflected this partnership and outlined the concrete steps required to realize such mutual commitments.

29. Building on the London Conference of January 2010, at the Kabul Conference the Government presented a comprehensive road map to achieve its objectives, consisting of 23 national priority programmes to advance progress in security, social and economic development, governance and the rule of law, including reforms to improve public financial management and accountability, and reduce corruption. In support of these undertakings, international participants expressed their willingness to progressively align their development assistance behind the national priority programmes with the goal of achieving 80 per cent alignment over the next two years. The international community also reaffirmed its support for channelling at least 50 per cent of its assistance through the Government's core budget in the same time frame. In line with the Paris principles of aid effectiveness, donors agreed to work with the Government to improve Afghan procurement and international contracting procedures, and to further the effectiveness of assistance provided outside the Government budget.

30. The Government has made a promising start in taking forward the Kabul process. First, it has begun to detail the national priority programmes with a focus on identifying short-term (3-6 months) and medium-term (6-12 months) targets. Second, it is taking steps to strengthen public financial management and administration through joint capacity assessments of the 14 line ministries responsible for the bulk of development spending. Identified capacity and delivery gaps will be addressed through the provision of additional technical assistance through the Civilian Technical Assistance Programme, training and procurement capacity-building. Third, the Government has committed itself to maintaining and further enhancing inter-ministerial collaboration and Cabinet oversight of progress of the Kabul process. The cluster approach, which organizes ministries within thematic clusters according to the Government's security and development priorities, with one ministry leading each cluster, will remain the framework for implementation of the prioritized development agenda but will be refined to maximize its focus and inclusiveness. Fourth, the Government has placed a high priority on the implementation of practical mechanisms to strengthen aid coherence. The "Operational guide: criteria for effective off-budget development finance" is intended to ensure that all donor projects are aligned with Government priorities

through a consultative process and financing agreement. This will enable the Government to monitor and track those activities conducted outside the Government budget or trust funds and report on them in its regular donor financial review. The Government will engage partners in the months ahead to establish open and efficient arrangements for consultation and certification of such donor activities.

31. Recognizing the need for a mutually accountable and effective monitoring mechanism for the Kabul process, the Government and international partners agreed in the communiqué of the Conference to strengthen the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, co-chaired by the Minister of Finance and my Special Representative. A number of practical steps have been jointly identified by the Co-Chairs, in consultation with Board members, including the holding of Board meetings every four months to take stock of progress, identify gaps and address obstacles to implementation. Ensuring overall coherence across the security, governance and development agendas will be an important oversight function of the Board. Such meetings will require effective preparation, for which the active engagement of the three standing committees on security, socio-economic development and governance is essential. The Government and UNAMA have proposed to align the standing committees more closely to the clusters, including through cluster leads co-chairing relevant standing committees. The first meeting of the Board since the Kabul Conference is expected to be held in November, to be preceded by at least one standing committee meeting in each subject area.

IV. Aid coherence

32. UNAMA is committed to supporting the Government's initiatives for greater aid coherence and effectiveness, as well as aligning aid behind the Government's priorities. UNAMA will thus facilitate a coherent Afghan-led agenda in security, governance and development. The joint efforts under way with the Government to strengthen the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board are intended to provide the required robust framework. UNAMA continues its close cooperation with its partners to enhance the functioning of the clusters, the standing committees and other relevant coordination mechanisms, and to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the decisions of the Board. UNAMA and my Special Representative continue to work closely with all international stakeholders, including the European Union Special Representative and the NATO senior civilian representative, to advance transition to greater Afghan leadership.

33. Justice reform is an important component of the governance agenda, and UNAMA continues to engage Afghan judicial institutions and donors on the preparation of a six-month justice action plan to strengthen judicial institutions, access to justice, linkages between formal and informal systems, and transitional justice. The Mission is also supporting the nomination and selection of members of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the High Office of Oversight, newly established as part of the Government's anti-corruption strategy.

34. The commitments made by the international community in London and Kabul to channel aid through the core budget requires that interim steps be taken, including increased financing through the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund and other common funding mechanisms, the implementation of operational guidelines for off-budget development financing, and openness in subcontracting and

procurement efforts. UNAMA continues to convene the weekly donor coordination meetings to encourage donors to take forward the "Operational guide: criteria for effective off-budget development finance".

35. The Kabul process is a national agenda which can be successful only if it delivers at the local level countrywide. As Co-Chair, with the Independent Directorate for Local Governance, of the Sub-National Governance Task Force, UNAMA is supporting the alignment of existing subnational policies and workplans with the six national priority programmes, including the Governors' performance fund, municipal governance and capacity-building. As a result, some donors have jointly funded these priority programmes. UNAMA field offices are supporting efforts to improve coordination among local and provincial officials in western Afghanistan through the organization of workshops in partnership with the Independent Directorate for Local Governance, funded by UNDP. Field offices are also assisting elected and appointed officials in the review and prioritization of provincial development plans, and facilitating partners in the field to channel their activities in support of identified needs. While the current emphasis on strengthening the capacity of line ministries is laudable, it is critical that efforts in Kabul are accompanied by capacity-building efforts at the provincial and district levels. UNAMA field offices are supporting Civil Service Commission-led provincial capacity-building working groups to ensure their ability to effectively oversee the many training programmes now being implemented at the provincial level. A workshop on quick-implementation projects conducted by UNAMA in Kapisa Province, for example, helped members of the provincial Working Group to understand the importance of developing a provincial capacity-building needs assessment and to build their confidence in meeting their responsibilities and fulfilling their roles.

36. The Kabul process can be successful only if it is inclusive of all segments of Afghan society. UNAMA continues to advocate for and support the participation of Afghan civil society, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the private sector in the implementation of the commitments made at the Kabul Conference. Engagement with Afghan non-governmental representatives on the development of cluster action plans and the participation of civil society in the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board are practical ways in which stakeholders can support the Government in realizing its commitments to the Afghan people. To promote the inclusiveness of the Kabul process, UNAMA advocated and supported the attendance, as observers, of representatives of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and civil society at the Board meeting of 8 July, which prepared the Kabul Conference, and for the attendance of civil society representatives at the Conference itself. My Deputy Special Representative in addition met delegates of Afghan women's networks and facilitated a number of meetings between the Government and civil society organizations, as a result of which it was agreed that two civil society representatives would speak at the Conference, both of them women. Bilateral meetings of UNAMA and seven civil society networks subsequently explored how civil society could better participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of the national priority programmes following the Conference.

V. Humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development

37. Ensuring access for humanitarian assistance remained a challenge during the reporting period, and ongoing conflict and insecurity continued to limit the presence and the activities of aid agencies across the country. Attacks against aid workers continued, representing a worrisome trend and impeding the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

38. The Emergency Response Fund established in February 2010 and administered by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (see A/64/872-S/2010/318), has received to date pledges totalling US$ 4,572,250, of which $1,008,592 has been disbursed. Allocations of $2,863,638 were made in response to the Samangan earthquake of 20 April 2010 and other localized emergencies.

39. Heavy rains early in August 2010 led to flash floods that affected nine Afghan provinces. The Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority reported that approximately 200,000 people were affected. The Authority, supported by humanitarian agencies, has provided humanitarian assistance in all nine affected provinces. While most of the immediate needs of the population have been covered, the provision of emergency shelter materials remains essential.

40. The majority of recent conflict-induced displacement occurred in the southern Provinces of Helmand and Kandahar. Working with local counterparts, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have continued to assist internally displaced persons in Lashkar Gah, Helmand Province.

41. A total of 97,145 Afghan refugees have voluntarily returned with UNHCR assistance so far in 2010, including 91,583 from Pakistan since the resumption of repatriation on 22 March, and 5,515 from the Islamic Republic of Iran from 1 January to 15 August. The Government of Afghanistan and UNHCR anticipate that the repatriation figure for 2010 will be double that of 2009.

42. The World Food Programme continues to provide nutrition and food assistance to the most vulnerable. During the reporting period, WFP provided 877,980 children with high-energy biscuits and school meals; and 10,200 tuberculosis patients and more than 2,080 pregnant or lactating women and children under 5 received supplementary food. A total of 19,365 people, mostly women, underwent skills training.

43. Community-based management of acute malnutrition is ongoing in 11 provinces, and 6,531 children have participated in the programme since January 2010. Approximately 20 per cent of Afghan newborn children do not complete routine immunization in their first year. The Ministry of Public Health, together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WHO, conducted the first Child Health Week in 25 of the 38 districts with less than 50 per cent immunization coverage in July and August. UNICEF participated in three rounds of national and subnational polio immunization days in the north-eastern, eastern and south-eastern regions during the reporting period. These campaigns targeted 4,437,797 people despite the difficult security conditions. Polio transmission remains a serious cause of concern and is facilitated by the constant population movements between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

44. Five maternal health training centres were inaugurated in June in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Nangarhar, Kandahar and Herat. Maternity homes have been built in Kandahar, Badakhshan, Kunar, Laghman, Bamyan and Herat.

45. The Ministry of Education, in its new national education strategic plan, committed itself to achieving a literacy rate of 75 per cent by 2020. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is supporting this goal through nine-month literacy programmes. From May to July 2010, approximately 90,000 village youths and adults, 60 per cent of them women, in 47 districts completed the programme.

46. The Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNAMA jointly launched the 2009 survey, *Drug Use in Afghanistan*, on 21 June. The report estimates that nearly 940,000 Afghans between 15 and 64 are regular and/or problem drug users. Opium use has increased by 53 per cent and heroin use by 140 per cent since the last survey was conducted in 2005. The survey also reported that only 11 per cent of drug users had received any form of treatment or intervention, as the current capacity can treat only 10,500 people annually. Some 780,000 drug users await treatment. President Karzai marked the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on 26 June with a strong message of support for counter-narcotics efforts. The Ministry and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime verified 2,316 hectares of fields in 11 provinces — Badakhshan, Farah, Helmand, Herat, Kabul, Kapisa, Laghman, Nangarhar, Nimroz, Takhar and Uruzgan — where poppy had been eradicated, but instability continued to hamper eradication campaigns in the south and south-west.

47. July saw the highest opium price rise over the past five years, because of speculation related to insecurity, military operations and the opium disease. This trend undoes the steady decline of prices over the most recent years and is expected to result in increased surface planting (higher acreage) and eventually the loss of one or more opium-free provinces in 2011. Mitigation measures will require enhanced national interventions and international assistance in pre-planting campaigns and the provision of alternative livelihoods.

48. Progress has been made towards clearing mine and explosive ordnance contamination of the Aynak Copper Mine, which is expected to produce a significant number of jobs and boost the Afghan economy. The first area designated for clearance is 80 per cent complete and will be handed over to the Ministry of Mines in a few months' time. A cross-border agreement between Afghanistan and Tajikistan will permit mine clearance in remote parts of Badakhshan and promote the development of impoverished rural communities.

VI. Human rights

49. The mid-year report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Afghanistan, released by UNAMA on 10 August, highlighted the rising human cost of the ongoing conflict. UNAMA documented 3,268 conflict-related civilian casualties, including deaths and/or injuries of Afghan civilians, from 1 January to 30 June 2010, a 31 per cent increase compared to the first six months of 2009. Anti-government elements were responsible for 2,477 casualties, up 53 per cent from the same period in 2009. Casualties attributed to pro-government forces, at

386, decreased by 30 per cent during the same period, the result of a significant decline in deaths and injuries caused by air attacks.

50. Anti-government elements used a greater number of larger and more sophisticated improvised explosive devices throughout the country, those devices accounting for 29 per cent of the total number of civilian deaths in the first six months of 2010. Furthermore, the number of civilians assassinated or executed by anti-government elements surged by more than 95 per cent, including public executions of children. In the case of pro-government forces, air attacks remained the most harmful of their tactics, accounting for 31 per cent of the total civilian deaths attributed to them. However, civilian deaths caused by pro-government force air strikes decreased by 64 per cent from the same period in 2009, reflecting the implementation of the ISAF tactical directives restricting air strikes and other measures taken in an effort to reduce civilian casualties.

51. The findings of the report also demonstrate that Afghan children and women are increasingly bearing the brunt of the conflict. Women casualties increased by 6 per cent and child casualties leaped by 55 per cent from 2009. Improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks by anti-government elements caused the most casualties among women and children, including 74 children, which represents an increase of 155 per cent from the same period in 2009.

52. UNAMA and the United Nations Development Fund for Women actively supported the participation of civil society, women's groups and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in the Kabul Conference. UNAMA assisted in coordinating a two-day gathering on 17 and 18 July, which brought together nearly 200 women from all over Afghanistan to identify priority issues for women at the Conference. Civil society and Human Rights Commission participants stressed during the Conference that women's rights and human rights should not be compromised in the ongoing peace and reconciliation process, and called for the enforcement of legislation supporting women's rights. The communiqué of the Conference called for the inclusion of Afghan civil society and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in the implementation of the national priority programme for human rights and civic responsibilities. The Human Rights Commission has since met line ministries and civil society to develop a six-month plan of activities to implement the programme, which includes strengthening of the Human Rights Support Unit in the Ministry of Justice. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission on 21 August submitted a six-month plan of activities to the Ministry of Finance and the President's Office for approval.

53. UNAMA is monitoring the activities of the previously mentioned Detention Release Committee established by the Government of Afghanistan following the Peace Jirga held in June to review cases of suspected insurgents detained without evidence or charge. UNAMA has stressed the importance of basing decisions on release strictly on legal grounds, in accordance with Afghan law and procedure. The Committee's spokesperson in August informed UNAMA that 304 individuals had been released. UNAMA is concerned about reported irregularities in the release of detainees and lack of openness in the review process.

54. The first six months of 2010 saw more than 1,030 incidents of child rights violations documented by the country task force on children and armed conflict. Because access to insecure areas remained a significant obstacle to the verification of reports, UNAMA and UNICEF initiated training in August for Afghan and

international field monitors on child rights violations. A sixth regional task force to monitor and report on child rights violations was established in Mazar-e-Sharif in June.

55. On 18 July, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on Children and Armed Conflict. The Committee's terms of reference include support for monitoring and reporting of grave child rights violations, policy and legal reform, and the prevention of violations, such as sexual abuse. The Government indicated its intention to develop an action plan on the prevention of recruitment of children under 18, including the need for more stringent verification procedures, following the description of underage recruitment of Afghan National Police in my most recent report on the status of children and armed conflict (A/64/742-S/2010/181). UNAMA and UNICEF will provide technical advice and capacity-building to support the Government's initiative.

VII. Mission support/operational issues

56. UNAMA has identified a safe and secure location, where the Mission can establish a Support Office and Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Centre, from where the Mission can fully perform administrative functions, particularly in human resources, finance and procurement and provide continuous back-up of the Mission's data. Steps are being taken to open the UNAMA Support Office in Kuwait by the end of September 2010. I am grateful to the Government of Kuwait for its generous support in this regard. The move of approximately 39 international posts from Kabul allows for the deployment to Afghanistan of critically needed substantive UNAMA staff, currently in the final stages of recruitment.

57. UNAMA is upgrading existing compounds to meet the revised minimum operating residential security standards. New secure consolidated residential and working premises provided by the Government of Afghanistan in Jalalabad opened on 6 August 2010. Similar initiatives are being pursued for the regional offices in Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar and Kunduz, with co-located accommodation and workspace available for all international staff and international armed guards. UNAMA and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) are undertaking a joint project to upgrade security for the UNAMA regional office in Herat, which is managed by UNOPS. UNAMA provincial offices are being upgraded on a priority basis, depending on the security environment and conditions of the current premises. Communications and connectivity upgrades are also under way.

58. The plans for additional secure accommodation and workspace for staff required to work in Kabul city centre include a new compound to be taken over from the Government of the Netherlands. The compound is expected to provide residential and office accommodation for more than 60 international staff and office accommodation for a similar number of national staff in November 2010. I am very grateful to the Netherlands for its assistance in this regard.

59. Because of the lack of secure accommodation in the mission area, the vacancy rate for UNAMA international staff remains at 39 per cent, as indicated in my last report. This is, however, projected to decrease as international staff members are deployed to Kuwait and with the progressive availability of new secure

accommodation for international staff in Kabul and throughout the Mission's regional and provincial presences.

VIII. Observations

60. The Kabul Conference demonstrated the commitment of the Government of Afghanistan to assume greater control of its own future. The substantive preparatory work undertaken by the Government was impressive given the breadth of issues addressed, the level of cooperation within and among ministries, and the depth of engagement with Afghan civil society and human rights representatives, as well as international bilateral and multilateral partners. The Government of Afghanistan, including the security forces, is to be congratulated on this historic achievement, which also required significant logistical and organizational preparations, which they carried out with great professionalism. I should also like to thank international partners for their practical and substantive assistance to the Government to ensure a successful outcome.

61. The Conference resulted in joint commitments with detailed benchmarks indicating a clear way forward: the Kabul process. The key commitments made by both the Government and the international community at the Conference included the development of a framework, timelines and benchmarks for the new national priority programmes, progress towards the Afghan lead in security, improvement of governance and tackling corruption. The timely implementation of these commitments will be essential to maintain the positive momentum of the Kabul process and I urge the international community to provide the necessary assistance to support the process, in greater alignment with Afghan priorities.

62. The Conference is merely the start of the Kabul process. The challenging task of detailing and implementing agreed commitments remains. In order to succeed, our activities must be focused on priority areas and appropriately sequenced and coordinated. While the national priority programmes focus on long-term growth, we will need to ensure that these efforts are also accompanied by immediate delivery to the Afghan people. There must be a peace dividend for Afghans to have confidence in future progress. The international community must support delivery of assistance at the national and subnational levels simultaneously as we look to building the framework and capacities for long-term sustainable development and governance. Maintaining focus and momentum on the transition to Afghan leadership in the face of rising security challenges, upcoming elections, and competing domestic, regional and international political pressures will require sustained Government attention, as well as the coherent support of its international partners.

63. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board will be the main body to monitor the implementation the commitments made at both the London and Kabul Conferences, and will be the guardian of their implementation. My Special Representative, as co-chair of the Board, is consulting with the international community on how to strengthen this mechanism and its subsidiary coordination bodies, including the Government's clusters and the Board's standing committees.

64. The United Nations is committed to contributing to enhanced aid effectiveness by increasing the system's coherence and ability to deliver as one. My Special Representative is leading a United Nations country team effort to put in place an integrated strategic framework by December 2010 that will define priority areas for

United Nations engagement in support of Afghanistan's transition and practical measures to enhance collective impact in the field, in close cooperation with Afghan national and provincial authorities.

65. Much of the progress achieved is fragile and continues to be overshadowed by the deterioration in the security situation. The Government's efforts to implement the peace and reintegration programme are particularly important in this regard. The Government has established a number of initiatives centred on building confidence, which have been described in this report. The challenges for those leading the process will be to ensure sustainable momentum while maintaining the national consensus achieved at the Peace Jirga.

66. Meanwhile, the holding of credible national assembly elections on 18 September will be crucial to Afghanistan's democratic progress and to the strengthening of accountability between the Government and its people. While technical preparations for the elections remain on track, there are many challenges to be faced in the coming months. First, security threats could depress voter turnout in many areas. Second, while significant efforts have been made to learn from the lessons of 2009 to eliminate systemic fraud, it is impossible to totally eliminate the possibility of fraud. Third, the large number of candidates contesting the elections is likely to generate a large number of complaints, whether there are grounds for complaints or not. The effective functioning of the Electoral Complaints Commission in this regard, including at the provincial level, is critical. Finally, the need to prevent the opportunity for fraud has led the Independent Electoral Commission to close polling centres in the more volatile areas, causing some groups to complain of disenfranchisement. The Independent Electoral Commission has endeavoured, however, to add polling stations to polling centres in nearby areas as a means of addressing these concerns. I urge the Government of Afghanistan and its security forces to continue their efforts to safeguard both the electorate and the electoral process to ensure inclusive, transparent and credible elections. I also appeal to candidates to conduct campaigns in accordance with the rules and regulations issued by the Independent Electoral Commission. I commend the Commission for the decisions it has taken so far to enhance the credibility of the elections, often under significant pressure, as well as the international community for its support to the Commission.

67. Pursuit of long-term electoral reform, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1917 (2010) and the agreements reached at the London Conference and the Kabul Conference, remains an important priority. Discussions on the reform process need to begin soon. Working on the electoral reform agenda with the Government, electoral institutions, and all relevant Afghan and international partners will be a critical component of UNAMA activities after the elections of 18 September. The electoral legal framework and sustainability of the electoral calendar, the currently temporary nature of the Electoral Complaints Commission, a single nationwide civil and/or voter registry, district boundary demarcations for district council, municipal and village elections, support to national observation groups and political groups, and the institution- and capacity-building of the Independent Electoral Commission are among the issues to be discussed in the context of longer-term electoral reform.

68. I am encouraged to note the continuing dialogue between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries on regional cooperation in several areas. The regional

conference held ahead of the Kabul Conference and the establishment of the Core Group both fulfil a London Conference commitment and address coordination gaps in ongoing regional cooperation efforts. I encourage the Government to continue to strengthen its coordination with its regional partners. UNAMA will support this initiative through the good offices of my Special Representative.

69. I remain concerned by the increasing number of civilian casualties. In particular, Afghan children and women are increasingly being killed and injured in their homes and communities. The human impact of the conflict highlights the fact that measures to protect Afghan civilians effectively and to minimize the impact of the conflict on basic human rights are more urgent than ever. All concerned must do more to protect civilians and comply with their legal obligations under international law.

70. Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to thank my Special Representative, Staffan de Mistura, for his commitment and dedication, and to express my gratitude to the staff serving with UNAMA and the United Nations family for their hard work in support of Afghanistan.